



Date: July 16, 2013

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager

Through: W. Bowman Ferguson, Deputy City Manager

From: Rhonda B. Parker, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
Beth S. Timson, Assistant Director, Department of Parks and Recreation

Subject: Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Executive Summary

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has worked with residents of the City since September, 2012, in the creation of a new master plan for the department. The plan covers facilities, programming, maintenance, and the department itself; ideally, it will guide DPR's work for the next eight to ten years.

Recommendation

The Department of Parks and Recreation recommends that the City Council adopt the City of Durham Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2013 as presented.

Background

Creating this plan has been a long process for DPR, since it began in September of 2012 with the first meeting of the Steering Committee made up of residents who volunteered to serve. However, it has been exciting, and there has been an ongoing involvement with the public:

- eight community meetings in October and November, 2012, at sites across the City
- the Parks and Recreation Community Survey (PARCS) by the National Research Council, Inc. which went to 4,000 households broken out by City geography and demographics; it provided a 95% accuracy rate based on the returns received
- focus group meetings with groups that were underrepresented in the larger community meetings: Latinos, mature adults, and teens
- focus group meetings with staff from General Services and DPR as the two City employee units most involved in park and recreation operations
- the MindMixer interactive online site—*PlantoPlayMoreDurham.org*—that had signed up more than 240 registered participants by December, 2012

- program assessment data regularly collected by DPR staff as part of the recreation programming procedures
- incorporation of recommendations from existing adopted plans that impact parks and recreation
- data from the US 2010 Census and growth projections from the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Because this plan was created by DPR staff and the public in a very hands-on process, without the work of a consultant, it represents very clearly what the public considers important for its parks and recreation system moving into the next decade.

Issues/Analysis

This Master Plan draft has been reviewed and approved by the Steering Committee who worked through the public planning process with department staff from September, 2012 until April, 2013. It has also been reviewed by the Recreation Advisory Commission (RAC) and by the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission (DOST). The complete draft was posted for a final public review on the City web site from May 6 through June 6, 2013; all those who had participated in the process, whether through a public meeting or on MindMixer, were notified of this final draft review.

The plan discusses and makes recommendations on all aspects of DPR: facilities, programming, maintenance, and the department organization itself. It considers how this one department's plan relates to larger City plans, including the City Strategic Plan, and its own internal operations plans. The interconnected nature of these aspects is sometimes overlooked in a plan that focuses on only one element of a department's operations, and all participants in the plan see them as ideally being a seamless whole.

While some parks and recreation master plans include recommendations attached to projected costs and timeframes for implementation, this plan does not do that, for two main reasons:

- Within the plan's guiding recommendations, the ability is still preserved to take advantages of opportunities as they arise in a fluid market (for instance, the Holton Career and Resource Center was not a part of the previous park master plan, nor was the American Tobacco Trail mentioned in the trails plan). Similarly, programming needs to respond to social trends (for instance, the preference for "exercise programs" in the prior recreation programming plan never recommended Zumba classes because they were not popular then).
- The plan does include some very specific recommendations associated with the larger guiding principles (for instance, item 1.4. recommends "Acquire new land and build parks in underserved areas" and references the text page that notes the community south of I-40 and west of NC 55 is an underserved area). However, within a fiscally constrained capital budget, those projects will only advance in the sequence of the elected officials' priorities and associated funding availability.

Staff will bring project implementation recommendations to the City Council, with discussion of the needed resources, as part of each budget process.

Alternatives

The City Council could choose not to adopt this plan and to request the department to make minor or substantive changes to it.

Financial Impact

The plan does not authorize any expenditure.

CC: Master Plan
 Copy of PPT Presentation on the Plan